

REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF WORLD POPULATION YEAR

From the outset, the National Commission for the Observance of World Population Year has understood that the world population problem is a complex one, involving some of the deepest instincts and emotions of the human experience as well as some of the most important decisions that face the international community.

As we set about our study of the problem, which involved wide-ranging background reading, discussions, and presentations by experts, we were impressed that many other major issues confronting the world's leaders are significantly affected by world population trends. Among them are questions of the supply of food, consumption of energy and other natural resources, protection of the environment, economic and social development of peoples and nations, employment and unemployment, and the changing status of women. (Detailed in Appendix A.)

We, as individual members of the Commission, quite naturally hold divergent views on the implications of population growth and the steps required to cope with it. Yet, we are united in the conclusion that the complex issue of population growth and how we can best accommodate to it will not only remain with us but will gather in intensity on the world scene as time passes.

At the present time the number of governmental and private organizations which are actively concerned with population matters is large and still growing. In the United States, these include the Departments of State, Commerce, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare; the Agency for International Development, and numerous private groups, including academic and professional associations. (Detailed in Appendix B.)

The threads of policy and action are in many and diverse hands. A greater sense of pattern is needed.

Accordingly, we recommend that you establish a permanent, high-level unit to monitor and coordinate all public and private efforts in the United States relating to population changes. This unit might be

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composed entirely of Government officials, or it could comprise a mixture of public and private individuals. Among its major responsibilities could be the following:

1. To advise the President of developments in the population field and recommend means of dealing with them;
2. To monitor and coordinate the policies and programs of governmental agencies involved in population matters, setting priorities and working to assure consistency and effectiveness;
3. To determine the best means of satisfying a number of vital and currently unmet informational and research needs in the population field, relating especially to the economic and social consequences of population change, family planning services, biomedical research, the status of women in relation to population, population education, and data collection and analysis. (Detailed in Appendix C.)
4. To develop impact statements for use by the Executive and Legislative Branches which would examine the likely effects on our population of proposed Government actions in such fields as taxation and public housing;
5. To carry on this Commission's work of creating a greater awareness and understanding among the American people of the facts and implications of population growth, both in the United States and throughout the world, and its relationship to the quality of human life;
6. To work with interested private organizations to achieve maximum mutual assistance and support.

The Commission is convinced that one of the most urgent tasks facing humanity is that of developing a more rational and comprehensive approach to the population problem. We believe that the creation of the proposed permanent, high-level unit is a major and requisite step in that process. We respectfully urge your consideration of this recommendation.

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In seeking to carry out its official mandate to create in the United States a greater awareness and understanding of the problem of population growth, the Commission initiated or participated in a number of activities. (Detailed in Appendix D.)

Many other activities for furthering the objectives of World Population Year were organized by a wide range of American non-governmental organizations in 1974 and well into 1975. These included a large number of seminars and conferences at which the World Population and the World Food Conferences were assessed and continuing policy needs in these fields were discussed. United Nations Day, October 24, 1974, was declared World Population Day by a coalition of organizations, and programs on population and related issues were developed on a broad scale in many communities. Population questions were the subject of increased media coverage; many organizations devoted particular attention to population and related issues in their regular publications or in special editions. Several universities sponsored conferences and seminars, and the Year lent added stimulus to the development of population education materials.

Certain members of the Commission believe that our Government policies and programs relating to the world population problem have been characterized by too much emphasis on curbing population growth, and that not enough attention has been given to economic development and food production. Individual statements by three of these members are attached in Appendix E. In any event, the Commission strongly believes that our assistance to foreign population programs should be seen as only a part -- but an essential part -- of the overall United States undertaking to assist developing countries in their efforts to achieve economic and social progress.